

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9737

INFO AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

AMCONSUL KARACHI

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E.O. 11652: N/A

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SUBJECT: GUJRAT BY-ELECTION

1. PPP CANDIDATE HAKIM MOHAMMAD SARDAR KHAN, RESPECTED ADVOCATE FROM GUJRAT, WON GUJRAT II BY-ELECTION HANDILY WITH 72,347 VOTES (MAJORITY OF 46,182 OF 101,015). UDF CANDIDATE CHAUDHRI GHULAM RASUL CAME IN SECOND WITH 26,162 VOTES; THREE OTHER INDEPENDENT CANDIDATES RECEIVED INSIGNIFICANT AMOUNT OF VOTES AND LOST THEIR SECURITY DEPOSITS.

2. BY-ELECTION WAS LOOKED UPON BY ALL PARTIES AS TIMELY TEST OF PPP STRENGTH IN AREA. PPP DESPATCHED BIG GUNS INTO CAMPAIGN FRAY, INCLUDING GOP INFORMATION MINISTER MAULANA KAUSAR NIAZI AND SEVERAL PROVINCIAL MINISTERS. ON OTHER HAND, OPPOSITION, AFTER ITS INITIAL PREDICTIONS OF VICTORY DID NOT (OR COULD NOT) UTILIZE MAJOR LEADERS IN CAMPAIGN; FOR EXAMPLE, UDF'S PIR PAGARO NEVER APPEARED.

3. HAKIM WAS BORN IN KHARIAN TEHSIL OF GUJRAT DISTRICT IN 1913 AND COMES FROM "GUJJAR" (CATTLE RAISERS) COMMUNITY. HE WAS EDUCATED AT GOVERNMENT ENGINEERING SCHOOL AT RASUL (PUNJAB), LATER STUDIED INDIGENOUS MEDICINE AT TIBBIA COLLEGE IN
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DELHI (HENCE HONORIFIC OF HAKIM, OR PHYSICIAN), AND THEN

RECEIVED LAW DEGREE FROM PUNJAB UNIVERSITY IN 1953. HE HAS LAW PRACTICES IN BOTH GUJRAT AND LAHORE. HE ENTERED POLITICS IN 1943, WHEN HE BECAME GENERAL SECRETARY OF GUJRAT CITY MUSLIM LEAGUE, TOOK PART IN MUSLIM LEAGUE CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE MOVEMENT, AND CONSEQUENTLY SPENT RESPECTABLE LENGTH OF TIME IN JAIL. HE JOINED PPP IN LATE '60S (BUT WAS NOT FOUNDER MEMBER), AND IS A POPULAR AND RESPECTED MAN IN GUJRAT DISTRICT. HE IS ABOUT 10 YEARS YOUNGER THAN HIS OPPONENT RASUL, WHO, ALTHOUGH ALSO WELL KNOWN AND ADMIRER FIGURE IN GUJRAT, IS GENERALLY DESCRIBED AS SICK OLD MAN.

4. COMMENT: OPPOSITION POLITICIANS HAVE MADE BLANKET ACCUSATIONS OF GROSS IRREGULARITIES DURING BY-ELECTION. MOST SPECIFIC SO FAR WAS UDF LEADER CHAUDHRI ZAHUR ILAHI, WHO TOLD PRESS CONFERENCE OCTOBER 15 THAT GOVERNMENT SPENT RS. 50 LAKHS ON PETROL ALONE DURING BY-ELECTION, AND ILLEGALLY MADE USE OF 1,000 BUSES, 200 TRUCKS, 30 JEEPS AND 200 MINI-BUSES, MANY OF WHICH WERE OFFICIAL VEHICLES. ILAHI ALSO CLAIMED THAT "THOUSANDS" OF PHONY VOTES WERE CAST AND THAT PPP GUARDS WERE USED TO INTIMIDATE VOTERS. HE DEMANDED GOVERNMENT APPOINT SUPREME COURT JUDGE TO INVESTIGATE HIS CHARGES AND SAID THAT, IF JUDGE FOUND NO EVIDENCE OF ELECTORAL VIOLATIONS, HE WOULD RESIGN FROM NATIONAL ASSEMBLY AND QUIT POLITICS.

5. MOST POLITICAL OBSERVERS IN PUNJAB BELIEVE PPP INDULGED IN AT LEAST SOME RIGGING OF GUJRAT BY-ELECTION, THOUGH MOST ALLEGATIONS ARE MUCH MORE VAGUE THAN THOSE OF CHAUDHRI ILAHI. OUR BRITISH COLLEAGUES HAVE COMMENTED THAT THEIR SOURCES DESCRIBED BY-ELECTION AS MOST EXPENSIVE ONE PPP HAS FOUGHT. IT WOULD BE SURPRISING IF SOME RIGGING DID NOT TAKE PLACE, BECAUSE PPP LEADERS OBVIOUSLY LOOKED UPON ELECTION AS IMPORTANT MESSAGE TO PUBLIC ABOUT POPULARITY OF PARTY. HOWEVER, ON FACE OF IT, PPP CANDIDATE AND PPP GOVERNMENTS, BOTH IN PUNJAB AND IN CENTER, CERTAINLY SHOULD SEEM MORE ATTRACTIVE TO ORDINARY VOTER THAN ANY ALTERNATIVE OPPOSITION COULD OFFER.

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